

Speaker Biography
Public Hearing-Boston, MA
March 20, 2006
The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education

VALERIE F. LEWIS

VALERIE F. LEWIS was appointed Connecticut Commissioner of Higher Education in November 2000 by the Board of Governors for Higher Education. She is responsible for implementing the policies and directives of the Board and directing the Department of Higher Education. The Board of Governors for Higher Education is charged with coordinating, planning and policy-making for Connecticut public and independent higher education, and with licensure and accreditation of all postsecondary institutions, including private occupational schools.

In addition to its academic oversight and budgetary monitoring and analysis roles, the Department administers the state's financial aid programs, maintains the higher education management information system, conducts research on higher education issues, administers Alternate Routes to Teacher Certification, implements systemic educational opportunity programs, staffs the state's Commission on National and Community Service, and oversees various international partnerships.

Lewis came to leadership of these initiatives after long service within the Department as Deputy Commissioner. Over her 15 years in state service, she has taken special leadership in workforce development planning, academic coordination, and initiatives to build the pipeline of students prepared to benefit from higher education. In October 2003, Lewis was elected President of the State Higher Education Chief Executive Officers organization.

A Connecticut native, Ms. Lewis is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College with a major in English. She earned an M.A. in Education from the University of Connecticut and, while she finished doctoral study there in Educational Leadership, worked as a special assistant in the Offices of the Provost and the President. She has served in a variety of public and independent college administrative positions, including posts in admissions and financial aid, academic administration and finance. One of her signal first assignments at the Department of Higher Education was to determine and oversee the merger of the community and technical colleges.

Ms. Lewis is married to Thomas R. Lewis, a retired professor of geography now administering the Connecticut National Geographic Alliance, and has two children and two grandchildren.